

12 January 1961

DELETED
NOT RELEVANT
TO BAY OF PIGS

CUBA

Che Guevara, in a 7 January radio speech, reported the results of his two-month mission to the bloc to make arrangements for the bulk of Cuba's trade for 1961. He praised Sino-Soviet bloc economic assistance to Cuba and described it as politically motivated. In a reference to the cold war, he said: "We are not spectators in the struggle between two giants. We are an important part of this struggle."

Guevara stated that agreements signed during his tour provide for 2,700 Cuban technicians to be trained in the bloc, and he added that Soviet technicians are now working on the expropriated American-owned Nicaro and Moa Bay nickel plants, "which they promise to have operating in a short time," enabling Cuba to produce nickel "independently of other countries." He explained that minor difficulties had arisen in

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dealing with the bloc, including: "The socialist countries use the decimal system; we use the colonial system of pounds.... We will have to change all this."

Guevara revealed in his speech that the bloc has entered into a multilateral trade and payments arrangement with Cuba which considerably enhances the value of the economic agreements with the bloc. Cuba apparently will be able to sell sugar and other products to one bloc country and buy an equivalent value of goods from another. Thus, while only selling small amounts of sugar to certain countries--particularly the European satellites--Cuba can continue to purchase the goods it desires from these countries without being forced to part with large amounts of foreign exchange.

Such an arrangement highlights the special position Cuba has assumed vis-a-vis the bloc. The only comparable agreement the bloc has made with a non-Communist country was with Finland, and this one has since been abandoned. Even within the bloc, multilateral transactions are minimal and usually are used only to deal with a specific situation.

Guevara voiced impatience with economic disruptions caused by "exaggerated" preparations in Cuba for an "imperialist attack" and urged the people to return to their jobs. This could be taken as a rebuke to Fidel Castro, who continues to claim that a US attack will occur prior to Inauguration Day in the United States.

Despite Guevara's admonitions, war hysteria and feverish preparations are continuing.

reports the shooting down of a Cuban Air Force plane which evidently was mistaken for a "pirate" plane. Three

crew members were killed, according to the report, including one of Cuba's top pilots who was involved in last summer's trip to Czechoslovakia by Cuban Air Force trainees. Drastic police-state controls are being further tightened. As of 6 January the people of Havana appeared to be in a state of frightened expectancy. The [redacted] ambassador to Havana reported [redacted] that the US break with the Castro regime "had considerable impact upon the general public," which had already begun to feel isolated from the rest of the hemisphere.

Officials of a number of countries have privately stated that, while their governments could not now unilaterally break with Cuba without being subjected to the charge of following US footsteps too closely, they would support multilateral action--i.e., through the machinery of the 21-member Organization of American States (OAS)--severing diplomatic ties with the Castro regime. A majority of OAS members now seems ready to begin discussions looking toward a multilateral break with Cuba and the imposition of economic sanctions, although the support of two thirds of the member countries necessary for the imposition of such sanctions is not yet assured.

Colombian Foreign Minister Turbay told the US ambassador on 5 January he felt the time had come for collective OAS action and urged the United States to make special efforts to persuade the three "doubtful" governments of Mexico, Brazil, and Ecuador, since he considered that unanimity was essential for collective action to be effective.

Mexican Foreign Minister Tello had already advised the US Embassy that his government would feel obliged to abstain

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on any OAS action taken under the 1954 Caracas resolution against international Communism, but he implied that Mexico would not oppose such action. In Brazil, where policy making is virtually suspended pending the return of President-elect Quadros from Europe and his inauguration on 31 January, there is pressure for an attempt to mediate US-Cuban "differences." The Ecuadorean Government, preparing to play host to the 11th Inter-American Conference scheduled to open there later this year, appears anxious to avoid any action that might jeopardize its plans.

Three other countries--Chile, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic--appear reluctant to associate themselves with moves for strong action against Castro. In Chile, the government hopes to keep the Cuban problem out of the congressional election campaign

during the next two months, fearing a further swing to the left if emotions are raised over the Castro issue.

Argentina, which has been one of the sharpest critics of Cuba among the major Latin American countries, might be willing to support economic sanctions against Cuba but would be reluctant to break diplomatic relations for both hemisphere and internal security reasons. The government believes it should maintain a listening post in Cuba, where a number of important Peronista leaders reside. The Cuban opposition leaders have requested Argentina to maintain its embassy in order to furnish assistance to those seeking political asylum. The foreign minister has said that relations with Cuba could definitely not be severed before the 5 February local and senate elections.

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